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著者	POULTON Mark Cody
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METAMORPHOSIS: FANTASY AND ANIMISM IN IZUMI KYŌKA

Mark Cody POULTON

University of Victoria, Canada

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This article examines the roles that fantasy and animism play in the representation of nature in the literature of Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939). In focusing on two works, *Kechō* (1897) and *Kōya hijiri* (1900), I attempt to demonstrate how Kyōka's fiction runs counter to the evolutionist ideology of much Meiji and 19th century European literature, an ideology which in effect severed humanity's ties with the natural world. In his use of metamorphosis as a theme, and metaphor as a stylistic feature, Kyōka plays with notions of regression and recidivism. This is in a way characteristic of some *fin de siècle* fantastic literature in the West, but what distinguishes Kyōka's work is its affirmative stance toward natural and supernatural powers alien to the human sensibility.

Keywords: EVOLUTION AND RECIDIVISM, NATURE AND LITERATURE, METAPHOR AND METAMORPHOSIS, ANIMISM.

"Metamorphoses," he said, "are our way of showing, in riddles, that we know we are part of the animal world."¹

In her study of fantastic literature, Rosemary Jackson notes that the 1859 publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* spawned a number of literary "fantasies of recidivism", works like: Arthur Machen's *Great God Pan* (1894), Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1896), and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896).² On the one hand, such works went against the grain of the realist nineteenth century novel, for which the subtext was a bourgeois faith in human and social progress. But these novels also reflected an anxiety regarding humanity's new-found kinship with the animal world: without the thin protection that civilization provided, mankind was liable to backslide into a sub-human and immoral state. The 'natural man' was both criminal and bestial.

A similar connection between fantasy and recidivism was noticed by Freud. The imagination was essentially 'savage' and 'uncivilized':

The creation of the mental realm of fantasy finds a perfect parallel in the establishment of 'reservations' or 'nature reserves' in places where the requirements of agriculture, communications and industry threaten to bring about changes in the original face of the earth which will quickly make it unrecognizable. A nature reserve preserves its original state which everywhere else has been sacrificed to necessity. Everything, including what is useless and even what is

noxious, can grow and proliferate there as it pleases.³

In *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13), Freud identified two kinds of evolutionism, the ontogenetic, or individual, and the phylogenetic, or cultural. At the most 'primitive' stage of human development, animism (the 'world as mind') affirmed the omnipotence of thought, which Freud associated with the narcissistic or autoerotic stage of infantile psychology. Religious faith, which transferred power to the gods, paralleled the individual's growing attachment to love objects. The final stage, science, represented in both individual and cultural development the abandonment of faith to the 'reality principle'. According to Freud, evolution signified "a gradual renunciation of animistic thinking and libidinal desire". And it was precisely this animistic thinking which defined for Freud the regressive and uncanny quality of fantastic literature.⁴

Japan was faced with a somewhat different challenge when first confronted with evolutionist ideas in the Meiji period. In the first place it did not quite have the metaphysical resistance, born of a creationist theology like the West's, to evolutionism. (Buddhism's cosmology could even be regarded as a kind of proto-evolutionism.) But evolutionism had already been digested into the social-Darwinist ideas of Herbert Spencer, who more than Darwin exerted a tremendous influence over the development of social thought in Japan. In both philosophies, Darwin's and Spencer's, humanity still managed to hold a privileged position in the natural order. The doctrine of "the survival of the fittest" had in effect reinstated human supremacy under a scientific rather than a theological guise. Spencer extended this idea to social organization, suggesting that for evolutionist reasons, some individuals as well as races were superior to others. At the same time, one's environment—social or natural—became something to be exploited. Such doctrines were undoubtedly liberating at first; but they soon created a new form of social stratification and environmental destruction that was equally, if not more, constricting and deleterious than the traditional Japanese ethic. The aggressive and social-climbing new male of the Meiji era, typified by such post-Restoration slogans as *risshin shusse*, was a Spencerian creation. The ruthless opportunism of such a stance was scorned by writers like Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909) and Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939).

This study is not the first to attempt to put Kyōka in the context of European studies in psychology and fantastic literature. Waki Akiko, for example, has compared Kyōka favourably with the French writer Gerard de Nerval and she freely uses Jungian psychology to decode Kyōka's rich but enigmatic stories.⁵ My aim is, rather, to examine Kyōka's view of nature in the light of the influence that European ideologies of evolutionism had upon modern Japanese literature and culture. It needs hardly be said that Western ideas had a profound impact upon Japan in the Meiji era. Kyōka himself was regarded by many of his contemporaries as a kind of literary antediluvian, a throw-back to the dark and dirty days of Edo fiction. The modern era did not sit well with Kyōka, and to the extent that he admitted to an ideology, it was surely an anti-modern one. Anti-humanist as well: "How happy I

am that I owe nothing to Rodin or Tolstoy", he once wrote for a wall-hanging.⁶ Kyōka resented Rodin's muscular posturings as much as he did Tolstoy's moral posturings. But it was at the time a quixotic stance for a writer to take. A brave new humanism had taken hold in Meiji life and letters. Both natural and social science appeared to support it. But like many European writers of fantastic literature, Kyōka used fantasy not so much as an escape from reality, but as a critique of the modern world. Where Kyōka differs most from his counterparts in Europe and the United States is in his particular view of humanity's place in the natural scheme. For Kyōka, the notion of an evolutionary regression, whether from man into beast or adult into child, was not so terrifying as it was for many Western writers.

1.

Chimera (Kechō, 1897), an early story by Kyōka, story begins as a pantheistic critique of social Darwinist notions of man's role in society and nature. It was clearly written as a challenge to the new humanistic ideologies being promoted in the schools of his time, ideas to which Kyōka himself was no doubt subjected in his early education.

This was the first work by Kyōka to be written in the modern vernacular, and much of the story's appeal then, surely as now, must have been felt in its direct and intensely persuasive power as living speech. From the very first paragraph the reader is in the thrall of a brilliant, but naive and perverse, imagination:

Look! Look at that funny creature! I don't care if the weather's bad and I can't go out and play—wearing a sedge hat and a straw cape drenched in the streaming rain he's a wild boar crossing our bridge, I swear he is.

He's pulled his hat down over his eyes and he's bent into the wind so's not to get wet, so I can't see his face and I can't see his feet either 'cause his cape is long and dragging on the bridge, but I'd guess he must be a good five feet tall, a big'un for a boar, the *king* of boars in a conical crown heading for town, crossing my mother's bridge. (KZ 3: 114)⁷

Our narrator is a young boy, Ren, who is whiling away a rainy afternoon watching from the shelter of his hut a procession of weird and amusing creatures crossing a little footbridge. These are in fact people (and, as it turns out, his mother's customers) but it is so much more fun to imagine them as animals, or even vegetation: passers-by or fishermen by the river in their odd rain gear look more like boars or even mushrooms than like humans.

Kyōka goes on to examine virtually every permutation of the association of humans with natural phenomena in this story. Ren's game of identifying people with animals and plants is pushed further than mere imaginative play, onto a more existential plane, in an argument he has with his school-teacher. She insists that "humans are the highest form of life" (*yo no naka ichiban erai mono*). Ren counters that "people, cats, dogs, even bears, are all beasts the same". Indeed, Ren

tells the teacher, nature is more beautiful than humanity. Naively, he points out that the flowers in the schoolyard are prettier than she. This unflattering comparison of course makes the teacher ill-disposed toward the boy and his arguments. (In an aside, Ren describes his teacher as "a swarthy, short, squat and dumpy lady with her hair in a bun".) At any rate, looks are not everything, says the schoolmarm: What of the unique gift humans have of language, what of their Reason (*chie*)? But birds and beasts also speak, Ren insists, and if he cannot understand their language it is only because "my ears are small, and there's only so many voices I can listen to. But once I'm grown up, I'll understand them even if they're far away". As for mankind's 'Reason', Ren reduces this to the murderous craftiness he sees practised on their innocent prey by the surly and taciturn local fishermen and bird-catchers.

Ren's case for the commonality of man and beast is nonetheless primarily an aesthetic and not an ethical one. Nature is simply more beautiful than humanity; or rather, humanity is beautiful only so long as it emulates nature. Thus, even his pastime of imagining people as animal or vegetable life has an aesthetic orientation. Seen for what they are, humans on the whole are simply "ugly". By turning the people he sees in his world into flora and fauna in his imagination, Ren is engaging in an aesthetic act of creation. They only look like animals because it is more amusing to imagine them so. As he points out, playing at this game "is far more fun than going to the side-shows" (*tsumari misemono e iku yori zutto mashi na no*). This comment nevertheless hints at a subversive streak to the boy's sensibility, one which seemingly goes beyond the mere concerns of what is amusing or pretty. In this remark, humans are rendered as grotesques, freaks in a side-show. Their appreciation as aesthetic objects is therefore essentially a negative one, allowing the disdainful observer to appreciate all the more the superiority of his own privileged relationship with nature. This particular brand of aesthetics is therefore diametrically opposed to the ethical principles held up by his teacher. Here, the bestial is beautiful, and humanity *qua* humanity of aesthetic interest only to the extent that it is grotesque.

Ren holds up a pre-modern, pantheistic, view of man's relationship with nature which is at odds with the more progressive humanism his teacher promotes in their 'ethics' (*shūshin*) class. But his pantheistic world view is in fact a distorted reflection of his mother's more jaundiced contempt for humanity. Throughout the story, Ren acts as his mother's eyes, ears, and mouth for her contact with and commentary on the world. She readily interprets for the boy what he sees and hears, and his opinions are a naive expression of her own. Ren lives alone with his mother by the bridge over a river through and across which the life of the story flows. On the near side is a bustling, commercial town; the far side is populated by a mixed bag of day-labourers, pedlars, musicians and prostitutes. And beyond are hills and forests and orchards. When his father was still alive, Ren and his parents lived in an elegant villa in the hills overlooking the city, but his father is dead and he and his mother have fallen in the world. They now eke out a meager living by collecting tolls from those who cross the bridge. It is not surprising, then, that the boy's mother feels a sense of self-worth out of all proportion to her current humble station,

and harbours a deep resentment toward society as a whole. For her, all men are animals to the extent that they are 'beasts' (*kedamono*). At this point, the reader is made aware that the word *kedamono* has taken on an entirely new, and negative, connotation. And it is no accident that the school-teacher and a government official (dubbed *anko hakase*: "Dr. Frog-fish") are the least attractive people in the story. In the mother's scale of values represented here by Ren, education and government service have the sum effect of corrupting, rather than elevating, human nature. Feeling that their superior social position gives them *carte blanche*, the teacher and the civil servant are the only ones who try to cross the bridge without paying.

Ren has unwittingly incorporated his mother's deep bitterness for the way mankind has treated her. Together they live in a hermetic world in which pantheism is in fact a cloak for a jealous attitude of anti-humanism. One turns to nature out of a sense of having been cheated by humanity. In his *Anatomy of Self*, the psychiatrist Doi Takeo suggests that traditional Japanese apostrophes to nature do not simply provide the 'objective correlatives' for human emotional states. According to Doi, Japanese also seek in nature a harmony and sense of order which they cannot find in their social world.⁸ Something of this process may be seen in Kyōka's work, but to a far more extreme degree than is usually apparent in Japanese literature. Natural and aesthetic appreciation are, in this story, clearly a kind of anti-ethic, which is pitted against the humanism of Ren's teacher and the class which she represents. Ren's love of nature has an ideological program (as I believe did Kyōka's, though Kyōka himself would have denied its existence as ideology) which is both anti-social and anti-humanist. This is evidenced to an almost hysterical degree in *Chimera*. In contrast to the intoxicated delight in metaphoric make-believe which opens this story, is provided an invective flood Ren later unleashes on mankind in all its malice and ugliness:

How could they know what it was like? Stepped on, kicked and covered and buried with sand, made to drink boiling water, teased and bullied and whipped till you fall down and cry and spit blood the live-long day and think you're just going to die? and then have folk look way down on you as if you were some kind of freak made just for their pleasure and diversion and amusement, and your eyes are bloodshot and your hair's a mess and your lips are cut so all you can think is Beasts, you beasts you beasts you! and if you haven't suffered like that for five or even eight years how could you know? there's no way you'd know, my Mum says. Such stories made even Mum shudder when Dad was still alive though she herself didn't really understand it all, all the horror and bitterness and the pain and bitterness and the cruelty, till she'd gone through all that suffering herself, and then she taught me all she knew. (KZ 3: 129-30)

The heat of Kyōka's prose, always fierce, at this point reaches a veritable incandescence of bitterness. The reader cannot but be both fascinated and appalled. Can one love nature so much only by hating humanity so intensely?

Ren's mother is clearly the boy's ideological, emotional, and spiritual link with the

natural world. By the same token, she is also the figure which ensures his alienation from human society. So long as he can safely exist in a hermetic environment under the protective care of his mother, his alienation is clearly not a problem to him. I shall presently want to investigate the mother's identity further, but suffice it to say at this point that her role as both link and alienator is symbolically laid out in terms which are both topographic and zoomorphic. Predominantly natural features provide the backdrop and the measure for defining the relations between the boy, his mother, and his social environment, as well as for defining the essential identities of the central characters in the story. I have noted how Ren and his mother live by the river and make a living by collecting tolls on a bridge used by the locals. The river (though not identified in the story, undoubtedly based on Kanazawa's Asano, near which Kyōka was born and raised) neatly divides two social classes in the story: the respectable and relatively well-heeled population on the city-side, and the poorer, itinerant, populace on the mountain-side. In Kyōka's day, the far side of the Asano river was (as in the story here) the site of temples, a pleasure quarter and theatres, and slums occupied by itinerant or semi-itinerant labourers, as well as outcasts and gypsies.⁹ Beyond are the Utatsu hills (the site of the ruined estate which belonged to Ren's parents), where in Kyōka's time there were cemeteries.

The mother's physical situation very much defines her identity. As I have suggested, the river is a dividing line not only between two different social classes but also between the human and the non-human, between life and death, day-time reason and the murkier fringes of consciousness. The bridge provides a passage from one world to another, and it is the mother who controls that passage. In this sense, she functions as a combined Charon and Cerberus figure in this tale. She will give you safe passage, but you must pay; and if you don't pay, she is liable to eat you up. Kyōka has also carefully planted a Chinese hawthorn tree (*enoki*, a tree which is invariably an ominous sign of an entrance to another reality in his stories) by the toll booth, just in case we should miss the significance of the bridge.¹⁰

In the first half of the story, even while the *locus* of events is on the very fringes of society, the focus of attention is on the far side of the river. Once the physical, social and psychological situations of his characters have been established, Kyōka can then begin to move his protagonist as well as the narrative. When drama takes over from discursive exposition, it is no surprise then that the movement as it were crosses the river, and proceeds past the edge of town into the hills. This parallels on a more symbolic level an overall thematic trajectory away from humanity.

But until the story actually begins to move, *Chimera* is fixed on establishing barriers. At the same time, however, these barriers are presented in terms of a one-sided debate, one which advocates a demolition of all hierarchical structures, both social and evolutionary, defining and separating human beings from each other and from the natural world. Kyōka can indeed be quite logical when it serves his purposes. Thus, through both argument and imagery, Kyōka begins to undermine these structures at the same time as he is establishing them for the reader. Kamei Hideo has written that Kyōka's intent was to "tear down the logical distinctions between one thing and another (as well as the class discriminations between

people)".¹¹ Kyōka's imagery works on a more subliminal level: by associating or juxtaposing the human and the natural worlds through the use of such literary figures as metaphor, Kyōka intends to persuade the reader's imagination to see past the boundaries established through argument. Held up in their place is an egalitarian, undifferentiated, vision of the world, in which the cries and chattering of the beasts are a coherent language. In contrast, guile, hypocrisy and sophistry (all functions of the intellect) have emptied human speech—save the sympathetic rapport between Ren and his mother—of any meaning. Although the ideological interpretation can be overstressed, it is likely that all naturalist and ecological notions have an implicit social critique.¹² Conversely, there is a trend (as was the case with Kanazawa's topography) to project notions of human hierarchies onto the natural landscape. Society is so often confused with nature; confusing the two would also appear to be a quite conscious and deliberate technique in Kyōka's story. The resentment of the underclass toward its privileged overlords, an entirely social sentiment, is projected into a subversively pantheistic view of the place of humanity in nature.

Zoomorphic metaphors give flesh to the story's theme, that 'men are beasts', but 'animals are people too'. But metaphors alone cannot carry the narrative. Some dramatic incident is required to put Ren's ideas to the test, and this is presently furnished by an encounter the boy has with a monkey which had been abandoned on the river-bank by its trainer. Both the monkey and its trainer are pathetic, and sympathetic, creatures: the man is the only one, other than Ren and his mother, who evidently shares their deep affinity for animals, and he has left the monkey there because he feels it will be better off on its own. But the monkey is still imprisoned, tied to a stake on the river-bank, and tormented by the local children. One day Ren joins in teasing the monkey, and in the ensuing tussle he falls into the river.

The monkey is the catalyst for the crucial episode of the story. One must wonder, after all, whether this is not another Darwinian gloss to the tale. Both simian and domesticated, the monkey is close enough to the human to portray a quasi-human dignity and degradation, and yet at the same time express a vestige of the primal wildness of the animal. For there is something disconcertingly 'human' about monkeys, as anyone who has stared eye-to-eye with one must know. Is not the monkey as much reminded of his own 'humanity' when he gazes into our eyes, as we are troubled by the reflection in his eyes of our own kinship with the bestial? In short, the monkey is a liminal figure who allows our protagonist to cross a key existential boundary, one which has hitherto been only teased at by verbal associations. Only an event similar to death and transmigration could bring Ren close to a personal experience of the animal mind: this simian trickster provides Ren with the crisis whereby he finally joins the brotherhood of beasts.

The monkey lures him toward death; another animal must save him. On the brink of drowning, Ren is plucked out of the water by yet another, stranger, creature: the 'chimera' of the title. Here is how Ren describes it:

Just when I'd given up hope, I felt a piercing pain in my chest and then I inhaled a whole lot of water, and I felt kind of dreamy and tranquil. But then there was

a flash like a thread of pure red light and it expanded and grew brighter and enveloped my body. I breathed out in a gush, and I could see the edge of the hill far away and I felt my body lifted off the earth and high up higher than the peak, wrapped up in something cool. Large beautiful eyes.—Wet strands of hair fell down and stuck to my cheeks. All I could do was hold on for dear life. I remember closing my eyes tightly. This is no dream. (KZ 3: 142-143)

No dream perhaps, but there is not much here with which to make sense of Ren's experience. While intense and sensual, his description is disjointed and hallucinatory. Whoever, or whatever, saves him is vaguely feminine, but disembodied. Ren naturally goes to his mother for an explanation. For once, she will not help the boy make sense of his experience. Her explanation is given reluctantly, but it is no less evasive and enigmatic. She tells Ren that it was "a pretty sister who plays in the sky with her big, colourful, wings" who saved him, thus feeding into the boy's bestial fantasies. Reason points to the mother as Ren's saviour, but she is equally careful to dissociate herself from any involvement. Ren's saviour is called a 'sister' (*neesan*), not a 'mother'; her flowing sleeves, which appear so much like wings to the boy, are the *furisode* of a maiden, not a matron.

Kyōka may have intended to suggest that Ren's saviour was a prostitute: *kechō*, 'chimera', is Kanazawa slang for a harlot. Certainly, there is more than a hint of a psychosexual coming-of-age in Ren's experience, one which could not be afforded by his own mother. As in so many of Kyōka's stories, another woman, usually a 'big-sister' type, is substituted for the mother at a critical point in the protagonist's development. But on second thought the suggestion that the woman was a prostitute seems too much of a rationalization. As readers, we are firmly fixed in the subjective experience of this first-person narrative. The creature who saves Ren is as much bird or angel as she is woman, as the story's title implies. The *kechō* (literally, a 'bird of change', a 'goblin bird') is half avian, half feminine, all feathers, claws and beak. In an illustration of just such a beast in the late Edo writer Mantei Ōga's *Yamato bunko* (a tale Kyōka is well known to have loved) the *kechō* is a terrifying creature, less angelic than monstrous and demonic.¹³ This should not surprise us, since there is usually (figuratively speaking, though sometimes quite literally) a feather, fang, horn or scale to be found on the person of Kyōka's heroines.

We have in *Chimera* an early, and rather extreme, representation of the author's ideal woman, a virtual montage of human, natural and supernatural images and qualities. Kyōka's ideal woman is one which accords with a type identified by Tsuruta Kinya as *mukogawa no onna*—"the woman on the Other Side"—an ambivalent female who is both nurturing and threatening.¹⁴ Charles Inouye augments this idea in a recent article, characterising the Kyōka heroine as "a complex of maternal comfort and sexual desire", adding that "taboos of death and incest...deny the male protagonist's full engagement" with this woman.¹⁵

At the same time, however, "taboos of death and incest" also invite the protagonist to transgress into these forbidden and forbidding regions. Ren's quest for the 'painted bird' is essentially a desire to relive the ambivalent eroticism he discovered

in his brush with death in the river, an eroticism both suggested and avoided by his mother. The boy wanders into the hills where once his family lived, and there by the decaying ruins of their villa he experiences an almost classic case of schizophrenic dissociation. Spooked by the cries and whistles of night herons and other birds, he sees his childish double looking out the window from the ruins. (These symbols of infantile regression had, at the time Kyōka wrote *Chimera*, already been explored in such stories as *The Hidden Shrine* (Tae no miya; 1895) and *Dragon Pool* (Ryūtan-dan; 1896).) Ren then experiences a horrifying fantasy of his own body sprouting feathers and wings: a transmigratory metamorphosis into the object of his quest occurs at the point of his virtually complete regression to the point of birth. This time he is sure it is his mother who wrests him back to reality and, it may be added, a qualified humanity. The quest for one's origins, essentially a quest for the self, which naturally leads the Kyōka hero toward his mother, is also something of a death-wish. "I want to see the beautiful, winged sister!" cries Ren at the end of the story. Then he adds, "but it's all right now. Mother's here. My mother was here." (*okkasan ga irassharu kara, okkasan ga irasshatta kara.*) The unexpected shift in tense in the very last line of the story signals that, in fact, his mother is no longer here at all. The story ultimately leads beyond the confines of life into death, and hence beyond questions of nature and humanity into matters of the supernatural.

Ren's struggle with the monkey and his resultant salvation by the "beautiful winged lady" cast him into a protean frame of existence in which all the hierarchies and dichotomies between the human and animal, between the self and other, are first challenged by argument, then finally erased. For a moment his consciousness is joined with the bestial world, then wrested back by a mother no longer alive. Of course, the reader's humanistic defences—his skepticism—have been (if the story is successful) thoroughly eroded in Ren's encounter with his avian saviour.

Language is Kyōka's playground. Here Kyōka is carefully exploiting the connotative and associative power of words to create new and surprising images and relationships. People don't just look like animals in *Chimera*; even their names call up bestial associations. The nickname of the sneaky bureaucrat, "Doctor Frog-fish", is an excellent example of Kyōka's clever word-play in this tale, used to demonstrate how the mistransmission of ideas from his mother assumes an entirely different meaning for the boy. The mother remarks that the bureaucrat is only a 'phony doctor' (*hakase buri*) but in his obsession with beasts the boy understands this as "Doctor Yellowtail" (*buri* being a homophone for the fish). He goes on to reflect that the 'doctor' looks less like a yellowtail than the ugly, chapfallen, frog-fish. (One is tempted to translate *hakase buri* as "quack doctor", in an attempt to suggest something of the zoomorphic associations created by this pun on *buri*.) Such verbal play leads in a crescendo to the fabulous epiphanies and metamorphoses recounted in the latter half of the story.

Recidivism is thus not merely a thematic concern of this story but *informs* its writing, determines the shape the tale will take. At the same time, Kyōka's concerns are not merely naturalistic, that is restricted to the bestial 'lower depths' of the human psyche. He intends through the function of fantasy to explore those undifferentiated

regions of consciousness that exist where the natural, human and supernatural meet. But so long as the reader attempts to identify and distinguish—to *make sense* of this story—enigmas are piled upon imponderables in Kyōka's prose. The truth is contained more in the delirious interiors than in the deceptive, ever shifting, surfaces. Kyōka's literature, as with most fantastic literature, is not the product of figuration, but of disfiguration.¹⁶ In other words, Kyōka's aesthetic concerns are ultimately not formal at all, dealing more with the *process* than the actual *product* of metamorphosis.

Here we see a narrative process at work which is typical of Kyōka: the metaphoric is picked up and projected into the realm of metamorphosis. The metaphoric image was a building block in the construction of a narrative: translated into action, the metaphor assumed a thoroughly 'literal' function of changing the shape of things, transforming reality.¹⁷ Even a pun can play into Kyōka's system of zoomorphic metaphors in *Chimera*. Ren's "Doctor Frog-fish" is still a credible creation, both accountable by the boy's naive character and his relationship with his mother, and coherent with the story's theme. But, as often happens at a critical or climactic point in a Kyōka work, both character and narrative dissolve in a logorrhea run wild with verbal associations. A metaphor was thus not merely a literary figure; for Kyōka, even words had a monstrous, *chimerical*, power to transform the world of the imagination. If, in *Chimera*, men are compared to beasts and beasts to people, the reader should be prepared for such a miraculous transformation of human and beast to take place before the story is done. The story's very title should alert us to such a process.

2.

Metamorphosis, then, is one of the unifying motifs in Kyōka's literature, a natural and quite spontaneous product of the associative power of words and images, and a motif which at the same time connects the human with the natural world. But between the process and the product of metamorphosis there is always a tension, even an antagonism. *The Saint of Mt. Kōya* (Koya hijiri; 1900; tr. 1990)¹⁸ is surely Kyōka's best known work by virtue of its ability to hold in equilibrium two analogous tensions: one tension between man and nature, the other between the style and the story itself. The sensuality of Kyōka's style, and the primal quality of his images, puts us in touch with nature, while the story's moral and religious orientation reconciles us, however grudgingly, with humanity.

The germ of this idea can be seen in the fusion of erotic, natural and supernatural imagery in *Chimera*. The recurrent tale is that of a boy or young man who encounters an older, mysterious woman, whose ambivalent nature is one part maternal and another part frighteningly sexual. The setting for this encounter is a wilderness of mountains and water. The woman spares the hero where she would destroy other interlopers and then initiates him into certain mysteries of his own existence. Mountains, women, and water: this is the elemental triad of imagery in what Mishima Yukio (1925-70) called Kyōka's perennial drama. Women are

explicitly associated with bodies of water in such early stories as *The White Demon* (Shirakijo monogatari; 1894), *Minō Valley* (Minōdani; 1896), and *Dragon Pool*. All the 'heroines' in these stories conform to a common pattern of water nymphs and dragon ladies in Kyōka's work.¹⁹ The pattern is played out in Kyōka's play, *Demon Pond* (Yashagaike; 1916), in which a princess Shirayuki is dragon spirit, personification of the pond itself, and central character in a fairy-tale romance.

The Saint of Mt. Kōya represents the apogee of the variations on this theme. A priest by the name of Shūchō loses his way in the mountains and, after a horrific ordeal involving such loathsome creatures as snakes and leeches, makes his way to a mountain cottage where he begs permission to stay the night. The cottage's mistress is as beautiful as she is mysterious. She leads him to a pool where she washes his back and heals the wounds from his journey, but the priest somehow fears her and does not yield to her considerable charm. More than once, the woman is obliged to rebuff amorous animals—toads, bats, monkeys, a horse—who jealously pester her in the priest's presence. The priest's experiences that night oscillate wildly between images of exquisite order and profound disorder. The following day, on his way back to civilization, an older man who is both an acquaintance of and accomplice to the woman tells the priest that the woman is a fearsome witch who seduces men and transforms them into beasts when she tires of them. The priest is fortunate to have survived, and the old man warns him not to return, nor feel sorry for the woman, but go on his way and resume his religious devotions.

One reason for this story's coherence and success is its obvious recourse to myth and fairy tale. The great venerability and universality of folkloric motifs guarantee its imaginative power, providing resonances, for a European reader, of the myth of Artemis and Actaeon, or Circe and Odysseus.²⁰ Folklore here may threaten to reduce what is a sophisticated novel into something naive; indeed, the above summary makes *Mt. Kōya* sound rather silly and childish, as do many other Kyōka stories in *precis*. But it serves more importantly as a structuring principle, bringing the imagery into alignment with the narrative. Myth and folktale provide ready-made story-telling motifs, filled with imagery, for the inventive writer, and their themes are not easily exhausted. Without these motifs, Kyōka's stories were liable to atomize into a chaotic, brownian motion of incoherent images. Something of this tendency can be seen in *Chimera*, where the latter part of the story disintegrates into Ren's search for an impossible image. The mythic, archetypal, quality of *Mt. Kōya* ensures a balance between the purely sensual appeal of its images and the more logical requirements for a coherent narrative. By this process, the dominant image of this story, water, is "largely made thematic", as Charles Inouye points out.²¹ In other words, imagery is subordinated by means of folkloric motifs to the basic need to tell a good story.

Not surprisingly, considerable study of *Mt. Kōya* has already been done, and there are several excellent interpretations of this story. Inouye's article focuses on Kyōka's use of water imagery. Elsewhere, the focus has been not so much on stylistic, but thematic, considerations. *Mt. Kōya* has been seen variously as an allegory of anti-modernist or childhood regression, or of religious awakening. Tsuruta Kinya's

analysis reads the story more as a quest for an eternal female, a quest which is essentially neither moral, nor religious, nor centered on the hero's development as a mature individual. The focus of this story, according to Tsuruta, is the purely sensual pursuit of beauty itself, the experience of which is afforded by the woman.²²

Although I shall have recourse to refer to some of the ideas put forth by other critics, in the following pages I shall attempt to demonstrate how, through its use of natural images, *Mt. Kōya* strikes a balance between the story's narrative demands and the sensual and aesthetic prerogatives of its style. The tension between narrative, on the one hand, and style, on the other, is as I see it more generally related to the priest's own dilemma; will he surrender to what the woman offers, indeed represents, or will he enlist all his moral and religious teachings in order to resist her? Superficially, the story points to the latter—the priest, after all, escapes, returns to society, and becomes a holy man (*hijiri*), a “famous priest and preacher of his sect”. This would seem to indicate a triumph of morality over the senses, precisely what Tsuruta has denied in his analysis of the story. On the other hand, had the priest succumbed to his sensual urges, would he not have ended up like the woman's other suitors, turned into a beast? Or is it precisely because of his contact with the woman—it is not that he resists her; rather, he is profoundly moved by her—that the priest has become ‘holy’? Tsuruta has placed the moral dimension outside the story itself, attributing the priest's religious stature to austerities which have nothing to do with his adventure in the Hida mountains, but I believe this may be overstating the case. In simple terms, *Mt. Kōya* is a morality tale (this too helps to explain the story's popularity). But at the same time, the delights and terrors the priest experiences point to a kind of sensuality Tsuruta has identified as the primary orientation of the novel.

Before I attempt to respond to these various interpretations, I want to stress that I regard the role of morality in this novel as analogous in its function to the plot, indeed working in the plot's service. Moreover, the conflicting aesthetic and moral dimensions of this story have an important relationship to the matter of nature and man's place in it. I have already indicated how myth and folklore function to unify the conflicting demands of this story. The organizing and discriminating faculties of logic, causation, reason, and morality, generally determine the shape a story will take. In contrast, while good style may have its own formal requirements, those requirements are purely aesthetic and may seem polymorphously perverse to the ‘higher’ faculties of narrative. The appeal of good style is directly affective. Style is a function of the quest for pleasure, an aspect of the ‘natural man’, while narrative is a function of the quest for truth, an aspect of humanity.

Mt. Kōya's kernel in myth points to the fact that, like *Chimera*, it is basically about metamorphosis. But in a more profound way, it is really about various forms of enchantment. Although all the lovers in this story have been cast under a spell by its witch, the spell under which the priest is cast is even greater by virtue of his own moral and religious scruples. The enchantment of her other lovers is simply fabulous, the stuff of myth and fairy tale. The priest's enchantment is more psychological and symbolic. The tension the priest feels in his oscillating desire for and fear of the woman displaces the object of his desire and fear onto the landscape itself.

The woman becomes a veritable force of nature, and as such is capable of elemental powers of destruction and creation. Here, landscape becomes an "enchanted symbol of the self".²³

One way of reading *Kōya* is as a romantic quest narrative, one which pits its protagonist and his humanistic values against a savage, but seductive, natural environment. Kyōka sets up a tension between civilization and wilderness: the passage from human habitation into the mountains is also a return to a primitive, mythopoeic, way of relating to the world. The journey which Kyōka's protagonist takes is not only spatial, but temporal as well, a successive stripping away of the civilized self. The initial narrative action can be described as a general shift from the centre to the periphery.²⁴ This can be interpreted in a variety of ways: as a turning away from social consciousness, from the modern, urban, ethos, or from conventional morality and reason. These modes of behaviour and belief are being rejected for the free play of private fantasies and instinctive impressions in a mental landscape that is not littered with the detritus of civilization, but teeming with animal and vegetable life. As a general narrative movement, this process is closely connected with what Northrop Frye has described as "themes of descent".²⁵ That is to say, in the classic romance, the hero finds himself isolated from his society, and is forced to embark on a quest for reintegration. The initial stages of the quest introduce him to what Frye calls the "nocturnal" or "oracular" world, a place of enchantment where the hero gradually loses touch with his conscious, rational, self. There is an accompanying trend away from order into a chaotic and undifferentiated state of being. This chaos is a terrifying thing to confront, and yet it represents unlimited potential for regeneration into new forms. As such, it is therefore a necessary and even desirable stage in the process toward reintegration.

Mt. Kōya's protagonist is a priest, and as such is heir to a ritual and literary tradition in Japan of pilgrimage and retreat into nature. Such a tradition had the effect of humanizing nature in Japan, by projecting an existential map of mandalas, *uta makura* (poetic place names), travel narratives and the like onto an essentially raw and otherly wilderness. But it is important in this story that the priest should ultimately have no humanistic models and patterns to fall back upon with which to interpret his adventure there. The full impact of nature must have no man-made intermediaries if it is to have its necessary effect upon the priest. *Kōya* is in effect an account of deculturation. It is essential for the protagonist's self-discovery that he get lost in the "oracular" and enchanted world of the wilderness.

Getting lost is in fact the very point of the story. The narrative significantly opens *in medias res* (rather like Dante's *Inferno*), with the priest vainly trying to get his bearings from an ordinance survey map.²⁶ The priest has already strayed from the main road onto an unmarked path, in pursuit of a medicine pedlar. Earlier, the pedlar had made fun of the priest's fear of drinking the local water. It is important that water here, as it is later on, is connected with the most profound lessons the priest has to learn about himself, and this episode sets up an equally important idea concerning the priest's hardly holy, but very human, fear of annihilation. The priest recognizes that he must come to terms with his resentment and his fear, so off he goes,

like Alice after her white rabbit, into a disorienting dreamscape, as much to confront his demonic double as to save another soul. Along the way he encounters primitive and protean life-forms. His map is of no use in terrain like this: it “could never have recorded the snakes, caterpillars, birds’ eggs, vegetation, all the hardships” he is to experience. Once off the map, we pass with our priest from a rational, objective, description of phenomena into an evocation of purely subjective experience, one in which the images seem to well directly from the unconscious. Several times the priest remarks how he is losing a grip on his conscious self. The narrative is punctuated with words and phrases of bemusement, like *bonyari, toridome no nai kangae, ki ga tōku naru*. This experience is nonetheless still mediated by a religious epistemology. How appropriate then that the paradigm for his journey no longer is a map but instead becomes one of Buddhist texts and mandalas describing a metaphysical descent into hell! Shūchō’s journey is a necessary preliminary to his encounter with the woman. This journey, which like *Chimera* takes a devolutionary trajectory, culminates in a vision, one which is both primal and apocalyptic, in a forest dripping with leeches:

The earth would not be torn from its crust, nor would a fire plummet from heaven; no, nor would a great flood bring about the end of man. Instead, the first portent of the end of time [*yogawari*] would be here in this province of Hida, where a forest turns into leeches, a world of black-sinewed bugs swimming in a sea of mud and blood. Or so I fancied[...to *bonyari*]. (KZ 5: 595)

The creatures (snakes, bugs, eggs) which Shūchō encounters on his journey are both primitive and protean, which is to say that they are the furthest removed from the human and at the same time demonstrate a potential to metamorphose. Both the snakes and leeches have a flowing, oozing movement which recalls Kyōka’s major image of metamorphosis: water.²⁷ The priest fancies that the leeches are indeed born spontaneously from the rotting vegetation; they thrive on the blood of men and beasts. Vampires of the mud, they are clearly a paranoid presage of the woman herself. The priest is, as it were, initiated into her mysteries in his leech-dream. Her darkest, most parasitical side—or rather, the priest’s inarticulate fear of the feminine—is also in part exorcised by this experience.

I have suggested that, as in *Chimera*, Kyōka is playing here with the evolutionary scheme. But of course the allusions are less evolutionary than they are Buddhistic: the priest’s progress in the wilderness describes a descent through the Buddhist taxonomy of existence, the *rokudō*, or “six courses”: demons, pretas (hungry ghosts), beasts, ashuras (titans), humans, and gods. Whereas those creatures which the priest encounters on his way to the cottage are symbols of the feminine, the animals which live around the woman’s cottage are masculine, indeed metamorphoses of her old lovers. Here Kyōka is quite clearly associating man (that is, the male of the species) in his sexual expression as specifically bestial. The priest’s presence has aroused the jealousy of the woman’s former lovers, and late that night the local wildlife threatens to sweep the cottage up in a veritable orgy of bestiality. This scene, clamorous with

the cries of goats, oxen, bats and birds, is like a leaf taken from Faust's Walpurgisnacht. But it is not of course European literature or demonology the priest is reminded of, but his own Buddhist texts and images:

...from afar I also heard a pitter-pat, some beast I thought, running on two feet shod in straw sandals. But then, no, the panting of twenty, thirty, different *things* [*mono*]—the beating of wings, whisperings—all swarming around the house. I'll tell you—it was just like the Hell of Beasts [*chikushōdō*], silhouetted against the moonlit night: weird shapes, wild thrashings in the leaves of the trees—goblins, hobgoblins [*chimi mōryō*], who knows?—only a single shutter between us. (KZ 5: 635)

Nonetheless, like Ren, Shūchō must also discover here his own affinity with his bestial nature. Here the medicine pedlar serves as his demonic double. Earlier, the pedlar, now transformed into a horse, bridled in the priest's presence and refused to be led off to market by the old man who lives with the woman. The man cryptically suggested that there must be some "karmic connection" between the man and beast (*chikushō zokuen*) which so excited the horse. The woman tames the animal in what is surely the most explicitly erotic scene in the story, nothing less than a symbolic act of sex.

Unlike Ren's case however, nothing in the animal world is so appealing to Shūchō that he would naively choose to identify with it. An adult and a priest, he is too acculturated to feel any nostalgia for animal nature, and too self-aware to miss its raw sexuality. His sympathy must be directed to the woman, and to her idiot 'husband', whose eerily beautiful voice moved him to tears that evening. Briefly, the idiot is a double for the priest's potential self, what he must become if he wishes to remain with the woman and not be bestialized. In any event, the idiot also points to a sub-human future for the priest should he wish to stay.²⁸

Still, it is the erotic, if not quite the carnal, that supplies Shūchō's chief attraction to the woman, as well as much of the novel's appeal for the reader. The story's most erotic scenes are set in a landscape of water. First is the scene where the two bathe:

She then pours water over me and scrubs me down—my shoulders, back, ribs, my backside. Cold to the bone, you might think, but no. It was still hot, you might reason, but it wasn't that either. My blood was boiling, or perhaps it was because of the woman's warmth—the water her hands washed me with warmed my body through and through. Just as the best water is said to be soft.

No words can describe how I felt. Not drowsy but rather like I'd fallen into a trance. My wounds no longer hurt—I felt faint, clung fast to the woman's body as if wrapped in the petals of a flower. (KZ 5: 612)

As intensely erotic as this episode is, it is also akin to a religious experience, for the priest's bath is also something of a baptism, or *misogi*.²⁹ Shūchō is both physically restored and spiritually reborn through his contact with the water and the woman.

Here the botanical metaphor used to describe her body displaces the carnality of physical contact into a communion with nature. And a good thing it is too, for both the priest and the story, that physical contact is indeed rendered in such disembodied, but still sensual, terms. Elsewhere in the same episode the woman's body is described as transparent and pure (*sukitotte utsuru yō ni mieta*) as the water itself in the silver moonlight which bathes the scene, or like the "figure of some pale goddess". When the woman asks the priest what would the villagers downstream think if they found her drowned body, Shūchō again is reminded of a flower and replies "they would believe you were a white peach blossom". Here the potential for lust is displaced into an aesthetic exaltation and religious ecstasy.

Like all good erotic literature, this episode is powerfully suggestive by virtue of what it conceals from us. In this case, it being the priest's own narrative, it is what the priest conceals from himself which redeems the experience. I have noted how his mind makes an imaginative leap from carnal contact into a communion with nature itself. While this may be an evasatory tactic on his part to buffer the shock and thrill of the woman's touch (claiming "no words can describe how I felt", the priest describes the experience in terms of what it was *not*) it is precisely at this point that the mind-body dualism forged by the priest's own moralistic nature is collapsed. As Mishima pointed out, it is the priest's capacity for entering the woman's femininity through a sympathetic appreciation of her beauty, rather than physical violation, which ensures his survival.³⁰ Desire, fear and pity all play an equal part. No narrow moralism could have accomplished this. It is just as likely that prudish rejection would have put him in equal danger.

It is also at times like these when Kyōka's imaginative faculties distinguish him from the writings of those with more naturalistic or idealistic leanings. The beauty of Kyōka's prose clothes and conceals the nakedness of the priest's desire, where a writer like Tayama Katai would have, in Kyōka's own words, performed for us a confessional strip-tease.³¹ At the same time, *Kōya* is a considerably more subtle work than, say Kōda Rohan's "Encounter with a Skull" (*Taidokuro*: 1890), a story which in other respects so much resembles Kyōka's. How much more didactic, but at the same time more lubricious, are the goings-on between Rohan's narrator and his mysterious woman! There, one has the sense that Rohan's intended morality play has been seduced by its suggestive subject matter, and that the moralist has finally had to take revenge on his heroine, with rather gruesome and incoherent images of disease and corruption, so as to drive home his priggish point. Kyōka on the other hand perilously balances between the two extremes, suggesting both sexual and spiritual union, and equally avoiding both prudery and prurience (we must remember that this is still fairly racy prose for 1900!).

I have said that the priest's experience of the woman at such times is as religious and spiritual as it is sensual. But it is a spiritual experience of another order from that which is the object of his own religious devotions. Were we to turn around Goethe's expression, we would say that in Kyōka the eternal feminine leads us *downward*. Here Buddhism and its karmic taxonomy play no part, and the warm sensuality of this episode is closer to the natural pantheism of Shinto. Nor is this

in any way a moral universe which Shūchō inhabits at this stage. Morality is a human faculty, requiring that the subject define himself in contradistinction to his environment. But Shūchō is in no position here really to isolate himself either from the woman or his surroundings. The sensualism of the moment draws him into an identification with his environment which is beyond all notions of good and evil. This sensualism is interrupted by one of the woman's jealous lovers, a monkey no less, thus driving the priest back into the karmic world of his religious teachings.

In this story, full identification with nature presupposes not just the abandonment of moral religion, but finally annihilation of the self. Shūchō comes closest to this stage only after he actually leaves the woman. On the way back down the mountain the following day, he comes upon a waterfall divided into two streams: one, a fierce torrent, is called the 'Husband Falls', and the other, gentler, course is called the 'Wife Falls'.

It was as if she were trying to extend a stream across the rock so as to cling to her husband, but the rock clove through the two so that not a single drop crossed over. Thrust back, thin and writhing, what sufferings she must have had to endure! Even the sound was like a sob, a forelorn cry. This was the poor, gentle Wife.

But the Husband fell with a roar, as if to crush the rocks and pierce the earth with the sheer force of his fall. I felt for them, in my very bones, torn by that rock into two streams left and right. The broken-hearted Wife was like a beautiful woman who weeps and clings to her husband's lap, her body racked with sorrow. Even there on the bank, my flesh crawled, my body trembled. And to think it was there, downstream, that yesterday I bathed with the woman. Idle fancy, perhaps, but the woman's form floated up, as if painted upon the surface of the falls, then was swept under the torrent only to float again to the water's surface. Her skin was crushed to powder in a thousand jets of swirling water, scattered like flower petals. No sooner did I lament her passing than her face, her breasts, her limbs reformed, reassembled, floated up and then sank, were torn to shreds. No longer able to bear this seductive vision, I felt as if I'd thrown myself in head first and embraced the falls, fast in my arms. The earth-shaking roar of the Husband, his echo calling the mountain god, then rolling on, brought me back to my senses. Why, if he had such power, did he not save her? (KZ 5: 639-40)

In contrast with the scene the previous evening, where the woman is metaphorically linked to the landscape, here nature itself is personified, associated with the woman. The result may after all be the same, but in the former case, nature is evoked by means of the woman, whereas here, the woman is summoned directly from nature. The violent cataract of the 'Husband Falls' is the woman's true mate and the priest's rival. At this point, identification with the woman as nature, and nature as feminine, is complete. Shūchō even feels the waterfall's pain and regret that it cannot unite with her 'husband'. It would be simply too reductive to say that this is just a matter of

his projecting his own sexual desire onto the landscape.

At this moment, the narrative stops, and like the priest, the reader must also be wrested away from pure sensuality, indeed from nature itself, if we want the story to continue. Before the priest can either plunge into the cataract and perish, or return to the woman and so cut his ties with humanity, the horse trader appears. The old horse trader's story pulls us reluctantly out of the warm but chaotic sensuality of the vision of the falls, and back into the karmic plane. His is the tale's 'moral', in both senses of the word. The old man's narrative has as its chief function the purpose of disenchanting us, alienating us from the woman (she is a witch, we are told) and throwing us back into a moral universe which is more human than natural. Nevertheless, we are left with lingering doubts as to the choice which, however necessary, has been foisted upon us. The horse trader's story fulfills a simple epistemological function—like the answer to the 'whodunit' of a detective novel—but the reader also feels both let down and cheated in the bargain. Can we really trust his word? Tsuruta has remarked, with good reason, that his is an unreliable narrative.³² By this means, Kyōka is able to satisfy both moral and fictional conventions, even while he is subtly subverting them: a *reasonably* satisfying explanation for the woman's mysterious power has been given, and an excuse for the priest's decision to leave her for good.

Still, we cannot deny that the high points of a Kyōka story are those where style and image take over. Shūchō's waterfall hallucination closely resembles Ren's experience of being saved from drowning in *Chimera*. Here too, the imagery threatens to dissolve the coherence of the story into a chaos of primal sensuality. Charles Inouye writes that Shūchō's "confusion is, at its deepest level, a confusion of images, made possible because Kyōka himself has reached his most passionate and involved level of image reading, the point at which the integrity of the image no longer holds".³³ A confusion of images, or a confused imagination? Often in Kyōka's case it is rather the latter. But here the author demonstrates considerable control over the perilous balance between the sensual pull of his imagery and the more linear demands of his story. The sensuality of Kyōka's style, and the primal quality of his images, puts us in touch with nature, while the story's moral and religious orientation reconciles us, however grudgingly, with humanity. This sort of equanimity is not so easily found in Kyōka's literature. More often Kyōka takes us beyond human confines and leaves us there. *Mt. Kōya's* moral scope offers a formal balance and coherence where in other, more image-driven works, there is a stridency born of a raw passion which tends to alienate the reader. An apt contrast to this novel would be his play *Demon Pond*, where in the end its hero Akira has so thoroughly identified with the myth of the place that he has indeed become a story himself, and the temple bell (symbol of Buddhist moral control) is drowned by the passionate and chaotic predilections of an older natural ethos.

3.

The tension in Kyōka's literature between civilization and wilderness was an

expression of the author's own misgivings about the effects of modernization in his country. Kyōka pits the old and the 'natural' against the new and the 'civilized' and, while his sympathies lie clearly with the former, he was too astute to ascribe to any simplistic advocacy of 'back to the land'. Modern humanist ideologies had already effectively alienated the Japanese people both from their own past as well as from nature. At the same time, nature was never innocent in Kyōka's imaginative scheme. For Kyōka, the natural world was an essentially monstrous place in which all phenomena—human, animal, vegetable and mineral—constantly threatened to change shape and assume other forms: rocks turning into fish, trees into snakes or faces, waterfalls into a woman's body, and so on. His fantastic recidivism follows a devolutionary trajectory similar to that in much late Victorian fantastic literature, culminating in an animistic sensibility which governs both the themes and forms of his writing. This animism has its source for Kyōka in a kind of *anima*, an informing and 'feminine' spirit which links the human heroes of his stories to an essentially anti-human nature. The feminine aspect of humanity is commonly rendered in Kyōka as an impersonal, natural force. At the same time, nature is personified and eroticised. Kyōka's women, who are the focal points for his protagonists' encounters with nature, are always more than human: they are witches or goddesses who can change their own or others' forms at will.

But it is finally a more positive response to nature, and to women, a willingness to be swallowed up by the Other, that distinguishes Kyōka's attitudes toward life, literature and the supernatural from those of his European counterparts. For example, compare Shūchō's waterfall vision with the following experience, described in the final paragraph of Edgar Allen Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838):

And now we rushed into the embraces of the cataract, where a chasm threw itself open to receive us. But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow.³⁴

Poe's protagonist too tells a story of merging himself into a waterfall: this culminates Arthur Gordon Pym's fantastic voyage to Antarctica. But Poe's narrative accords with the orientation of most European fantastic literature, in that it instills a fear of life, and a misogynistic fear of women too, rather than a fear of death. The loss of self is undoubtedly a frightening experience, but still more terrible for writers like Poe is the essential otherness of nature itself, for nature here can no longer provide the protagonist with either redemption or substance for his identity. Humanity had essentially grown too civilized to see a regression to more primal states as anything but horrifying. Darwin's assertion that humanity was "different in degree but not in kind" from the beasts was altogether too alienating for a humanistic imagination.³⁵ The resemblances between Poe's work and Kyōka's are thus actually superficial: in a more fundamental way Poe represents the antithesis of Kyōka's world view. Kyōka may have feared nature, but he chose to worship rather than reject what he

feared.

Notes

- 1 A. S. Byatt, *Possession* (London: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 280.
- 2 Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981) p. 116.
- 3 Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (part iii), Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, James Strachey et al., trans. 1963, p. 372; quoted in Keith Thomas, in *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*. (London: Allen Lane, 1983), p. 242. Thomas's book, especially Chapter I on "Human Ascendancy" is an excellent introduction to the subject of European attitudes on nature and humanity.
- 4 See a discussion of Freud's ideas in connection with fantastic literature in Jackson, pp. 70-72.
- 5 See Waki Akiko, *Gensō no ronri: Izumi Kyōka no sekai* (Kōdansha Gendai Shinsho, 1974). Unless otherwise noted, Japanese works mentioned in this essay have been published in Tokyo.
- 6 Kyōka's autograph is reproduced in Noguchi Takehiko, ed. *Izumi Kyōka*. (*Shinchō Nihon bungaku arubamu* 22. Shinchōsha, 1985), p. 60.
- 7 References from Kyōka's texts will, as here, be provided in the body of this essay. "KZ" refers to Kyōka's Collected Works, *Kyōka zenshū* (Iwanami Shoten, 1986). All translations are mine.
- 8 Doi Takeo, *Anatomy of Self* (Kōdansha International, 1988; a translation by Mark Harbison of *Omote to Ura*), pp. 147-156; esp. p. 151: "It may be more accurate to say that the Japanese turn to nature because there is something unsatisfying in the way they deal with human relations, rather than to say simply that they escape from human complications. Only this would explain... why, strangely enough, they receive a *kokoro* that is much more human than the *kokoro* they have when they relate to other human beings." This is by no means a uniquely Japanese reaction to nature. A social critique is almost invariably the subtext of all appreciations of nature.
- 9 Edo maps of Kanazawa identified at least one ghetto of *hinin* ('non-humans' in Tokugawa jargon, describing those engaged in such taboo activities as leather-work, butchering, and tending corpses) on the east bank of the Asano.
- 10 Asada Shōjirō has identified Ren's mother with a type common to many other Kyōka works, one who in turn owes her pedigree to pre-modern sources: the *hashihime* or 'bridge maiden'. Asada Shōjirō, "Kyōka no hashihime", *Kyōka zenshū geppō* 5 (March, 1974). Chinese hawthorns and bridges appear in such works as *Hebi kui*, *Yukari no onna*, and *Yashagaike*. It is interesting that classical Western mythology is obliged to double the figure of the guardian to the otherworld, where in the Japanese one suffices.
- 11 Kamei Hideo, "Kyōka ni okeru kodama to warabeuta", *Bungaku*, Vol 51 (June, 1983).
- 12 cf. the 18th Century English vegetarian, Scot John Oswald, who hailed the French Revolution in 1791 as providing an opportunity for freedom, not just to the common man, but also to "the lower orders of life". Cited by Keith Thomas, p. 185.
- 13 An illustration of this creature in *Yamato bunko* was displayed by Charles Inouye, in his presentation "Kyōka and the Meiji Logocentrism" at the conference of the Association of Asian Studies, held in New Orleans, April 1991. For further discussion of Kyōka's debt to Edo *kusazōshi* for his imagery, see Inouye's "Water Imagery in the Works of Izumi Kyōka", *Monumenta Nipponica*, 46: 1 (Spring, 1991).
- 14 The idea of the nurturing and threatening woman is developed in Tsuruta Kinya's chapter on *Kōya hijiri* in *Nihon kindai bungaku ni okeru 'mukōgawa'* (Meiji Shoin, 1986).
- 15 Inouye, "Water Imagery", p. 65.
- 16 cf. Tobin Sievers's refutation of Todorov's view that the fantastic is "a symbol of language": *The Romantic Fantastic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 73.
- 17 For a discussion of the function of metaphor in fantastic literature, see Rosemary Jackson, p. 41.
- 18 *The Saint of Mt. Kōya*, Stephen Kohl, trans. (Kanazawa: Kyōka sakuin shuppankai, 1990). Translations here from *Kōya hijiri*, however, are mine and not Kohl's.
- 19 The "white demon lady" (*shirakijo*) of the first story refers to a water spirit who took the form of a

- serpent or dragon and was believed to reside in the headwaters of the Hino River (until recently called the Shirakijo River) which flows between Kanazawa and Fukui. The *ayashi no hime* ("weird Princess") of *Minōdani*, as well as the *utsukushiki hito* ("beautiful person") of *Ryūtandan* are both personifications of springs of water. A translation of *Ryūtandan* by this author is available. It was published by the Kyōka sakubin shuppankai in Kanazawa in 1987.
- 20 Another *locus classicus* for this motif is Apuleius' menippean satire, *The Golden Ass*. Kyōka read this work in translation when he was young, and refers to it in a story, *Meienki*, published a month before *Kōya hijiri*, in January, 1900. Odysseus' run-in with Circe is mentioned in Andersen's *Improvisatoren*, which in Mori Ōgai's 1892 translation was practically a style-book for young writers of that generation. Kyōka of course did not need to go to Western literature, classical or otherwise, for such material. Tales of sorceresses who change men into beasts are common in Japanese and other Asian folklore. Muramatsu Sadataka has identified a number of traditional stories of this kind from the classical Chinese, available to Kyōka through Bakin and other Edo fiction. There is also the tale of *Chikushōdani*, or "the valley of beasts", mentioned in an Edo collection of Hokuriku stories, *Sanshū kidan*.
- 21 Inouye, "Water Imagery", p. 54.
- 22 cf. Tsuruta's analysis in *Nihon kindai bungaku ni okeru 'mukōgawa'*. Other noteworthy studies are Maeda Ai, "Izumi Kyōka *Kōya hijiri*—Tabibito no monogatari", *Kokubungaku*, July, 1973. Reprinted in *Nihon bungaku shiryō soshō Izumi Kyōka*. [Hereafter, 'NBSS'] (Yūseido, 1980); and Tōgo Katsumi, "*Kōya hijiri* no suichūmu", NBSS.
- 23 I borrow this definition of landscape from an unpublished paper by Doug Moore, "On The Making of Maps", which applies the concepts of humanistic geography to a comparison of Ainu and West Coast native myths.
- 24 Here I am simplifying matters somewhat by dealing only with the priest's narrative. This narrative is in turn framed by a more 'realistic' narrative involved an "I" (The 'real' narrator of the story) who is an audience for the priest and his story. There is thus a narrative double structure to *Kōya*, which makes the story considerably more complex and subtle than my characterisation here. See Tsuruta, pp. 99-104.
- 25 See Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Harvard University Press, 1976).
- 26 In his essay on *Kōya hijiri*, Maeda Ai notes how the map is used ironically, as are railroads in the titles of such stories as *Fūryūsen* and *X Kamakiri tetsudō*, to signify the very limits of the Meiji Enlightenment: "Izumi Kyōka *Kōya hijiri*—Tabibito no monogatari". The idea is developed in Tōgo Katsumi's study, "Izumi Kyōka: sabetsu to kiki no kūkan" (*Nihon bungaku*, Vol. 33-1, No. 367, 1984). Both writers stress that the story should be read as a critique of rational modernism.
- 27 And, needless to say, the woman as well. Tsuruta devotes considerable analysis to the snakes which the priest encounters. One snake, which the priest Shucho calls the 'mistress' (*nushi*) of the mountain and to which he prays for safe passage, is identified by Tsuruta as a prefiguration of the woman; Tsuruta, p. 106. This of course fits with the woman's symbolic associations with water, and with her serpentine sisters in the other works I have mentioned above.
- 28 Tsuruta reviews the interpretation of the idiot's symbolic identity, pp. 129-30.
- 29 cf. Tōgo Katsumi, NBSS, 147. Maeda Ai also makes the same observation.
- 30 Mishima, "Kaisetsu", in Tanizawa Eiichi, Watanabe Ikkō, eds, *Kyōka ron shūsei*. (Hereafter abbreviated as 'KRS'; Rippū Shobō, 1983) p. 346 ff. Mishima's essay was first published in *Nihon no bungaku 4: Ozaki Kōyō; Izumi Kyōka* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1969).
- 31 cf. Kyōka's comments in his essay, "Romanchikku to shizenshugi", KZ 28: 684-91.
- 32 Tsuruta, pp. 136-143.
- 33 Inouye, p. 60.
- 34 *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. (New York: Heritage Press, 1930), p. 264. Compare this also with the following clinical example of schizophrenic dissociation, given by the radical therapist R. D. Laing, told to the British Columbia Psychological Association, concerning a couple who were both schizophrenic. One day the wife discovered her husband on the sofa with a naked woman. "What

are you doing on the sofa with a naked woman?" she asked him. "That is no woman", he replied, "That is a waterfall". Since she loved and trusted her husband, she thought, "It's a waterfall! But it has all the shape and appearance of a naked woman." And so she thought: is this real? (Broadcast on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio program, "Ideas", May 18, 1989.) *Mt. Kōya's* waterfall vision is closer to the spirit of Laing's anecdote, crazier but still life-affirming, than is the alienated experience related by Poe in the quote above.

- 35 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (Chicago, London and Toronto: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), Chapter IV, p. 319.

鏡花文学における幻想とアニミズム

コーデイ・ポルトン

要旨： 本稿は泉鏡花（1873-1939）の文学の自然描写における幻想とアニミズムの役割を考察するものである。十九世紀のヨーロッパ文学と明治の進化的イデオロギーは、人間と自然界とのつながりを積極的に断絶しようとした。『化鳥』（1897）と『高野聖』（1900）の二つの作品に焦点をあて、鏡花の小説がいかにその傾向に反するものであるかを論証することが本稿の狙いである。主題としての変形（メタモルフォース）の扱い、及び文体としての比喩（メタフォア）の使い方において、鏡花は退化と逆行という概念を玩ぶ。これは、ある意味で西欧の *fin de siècle* の幻想文学の特徴であるが、鏡花の作品が異なる点は、その人間感覚とはかけ離れた自然及び超自然の力に対する肯定的な立場にある。